



Most older adults prefer to remain in their homes as long as possible. To do so, it is essential that their home environment supports them to do their daily activities safely. **Home Modification** - making changes to the home environment to support a person's changing needs - can promote health, safety, and independence.

## Why are Home Modifications Important for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+) Older Adults?

It is estimated that by 2030 there will be approximately 7 million LGBTQ adults in the U.S. age 50 years and older. LGBTQ+ older adults face unique challenges and are:

- Twice as likely to be single and live alone than non-LGBTQ+ adults
- Four times less likely to have children
- Much more likely to have faced:
  - Discrimination and social stigma
  - Lack of access to knowledgeable providers
  - Barriers such as unemployment or poverty
  - Refusals of service

### Due to these barriers, LGBTQ+ individuals have:

- Lower rates of accessing health care (up to 30%)
- Increased rates of depression
- Health conditions that are often worsened by inadequate healthcare

While LGBTQ+ adults have support systems often made up of Significant Others, Friends, Family, and Allies (SOFFA), they are more likely than non-LGBTQ+ adults to live alone with inadequate caregiving or planning for their long-term needs.

**Health conditions, including depression, can increase fall risk. A safe and supportive home environment can reduce fall hazards and promote independence, especially when living alone with limited caregiver support.**

# Low-Cost Home Modifications

This checklist contains inexpensive and easy tips that can help individuals **REMAIN** at home independently: **R**emove, **E**nhance, **M**odify, **A**ccessorize, **I**nstall, and **N**otice.

<p><b>Remove:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Clutter</u> on floors for clear pathways</li><li>• <u>Electrical cords</u> from pathways by tacking them to the walls</li><li>• <u>Tripping hazards</u> such as throw rugs, loose carpeting or uneven areas on floors</li><li>• <u>Heavier and frequently used items</u> from out of reach locations and place within easy reach</li><li>• <u>Furniture</u> from walking pathways</li></ul>	<p><b>Enhance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Safety at night</u> with night lights to mark the path between the bedroom and bathroom and a lamp by the bed</li><li>• <u>Navigation</u> by marking uneven thresholds with contrasting tape or paint or remove thresholds entirely</li><li>• <u>Bathing safety</u> with non-skid strips on tub or shower floors, secured bathmats, and shower chairs for sitting while bathing</li></ul>
<p><b>Modify:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Toilet seats</u> to make them higher so that it is easier to sit down and stand up</li><li>• <u>Light switches</u> to rocker switches and change <u>round door handles</u> to levers for easier use</li><li>• <u>Shower head</u> to be adjustable height and/or a hand-held shower head to improve reach</li><li>• <u>Doorways</u> to 32" through offset hinges</li></ul>	<p><b>Accessorize with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>An emergency alert system</u> if a fall or urgent need takes place</li><li>• <u>A bell on a small dog or a cat</u> - small pets can be obstacles when not seen or heard</li><li>• <u>Gripper rug pads</u> under throw rugs</li><li>• <u>Added seating for dressing and cooking prep</u></li><li>• <u>A simple Smart Home Device</u> that may provide interaction to reduce loneliness</li></ul>
<p><b>Install:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Soft corners and edges</u> to sharp furniture</li><li>• <u>Grab bars</u> for support in and around tubs, showers, and toilets with wall reinforcement and anchored to studs</li><li>• <u>Anti-scald</u> water devices to keep the temperature below 120 degrees</li></ul>	<p><b>Notice:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>After modifications are made</u>, are they used, and if so, used correctly? Awareness is key to continued use; if not, it is important to determine why</li><li>• <u>Needs change over time</u> - new circumstances may merit different modifications</li></ul>

# How to Get Home Modifications

## 1. Funding Sources

Depending on income, abilities, and age, people may qualify for financial support to make the changes. For information on home modification funding sources by state, visit [www.homemods.org/hmin](http://www.homemods.org/hmin)

## 2. Finding A Professional

When a professional is needed to check the home and/or make the modifications, a home modification program or specialist can be located through:

- The [Local area agency on aging](#): Call the Eldercare Locator at: 800-677-1116
- An [Independent Living Center](#)
- The [National Directory of Home Modification and Repair Resources](#) lists providers by city

## 3. More Information

- **SAGE (a national advocacy and services organization for LGBTQ+ elders)** has a housing website portal, **Welcome Home**, that offers consumer education materials to assist LGBTQ+ older people about aging in place, home modification best practices, and fair housing protections: [www.sageusa.org/lgbthousing](http://www.sageusa.org/lgbthousing)

## References

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